



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
10 W. JACKSON BLVD.
CHICAGO, IL 60604

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Gail Montenegro
Marilú Cabrera
(312) 385-1925

300 Become New Americans in Commemoration of National "Citizenship Day"

CHICAGO, IL. September 13, 1999 - In a naturalization ceremony held by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), 300 new citizens were sworn in at the University of Illinois this morning by Honorable Abraham Lincoln Marovitz, Senior Judge for the U.S. District Court of Northern Illinois. Candidates for today's ceremony included persons from 60 different countries, with 27% from Mexico, 16% from Poland, and 9% from India.

This ceremony was held in commemoration of national "Citizenship Day," which is celebrated each year on September 17 during National Constitution Week. National "Citizenship Day" honors those immigrants who have chosen to become citizens of the United States and recognizes the importance of responsible citizenship in our communities and neighborhoods.

Today's keynote speaker, Canadian-born WBBM-TV reporter and news anchor Linda MacLennan, is herself a citizen of the United States. As she addressed the 300 new citizens today, she spoke of what it means to be a citizen of this country. "It's been 12 years since my own swearing-in, but I'll always be grateful for the privilege of making this country home. As we head into a new century of immigration, this remains a country where all is possible and where dreams, even the dreams of one new immigrant, can still be turned into reality."

Today's ceremony was supported by Mayor Daley's Citizenship Assistance Council. The 21-member council, formed in 1994, works to promote the citizenship process among Chicago's many immigrant groups.

The INS office in Chicago has shown a dramatic increase in the number of citizenship cases processed this fiscal year, which ends on September 30, 1999. In the first 11 months of the current fiscal year, the Chicago office naturalized 36,623 new citizens, surpassing last year's total figure of 17,635.

"The INS has made the citizenship process its number one priority nationwide," says INS District Director Brian R. Perryman. "For many immigrants, becoming a U.S. citizen is the final step toward reaching the American dream. "

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